**ANNUAL VILLAGE ASSEMBLY**

**HELD AT WATCHFIELD VILLAGE HALL**

**TUESDAY 22nd MAY 2019**

**Minutes**

**Present:**

**District Cllrs Elaine Ware and Simon Howell (VWHDC)**

**County Cllr Yvonne Constance (OCC)**

**Sue Nodder – Watchfield Parish Council**

**Tom Pryor – Thames Valley Police**

**Ruth Holman – Watchfield Village Hall and Over 50’s Club.**

**Elaine Bayston – Watchfield over 50’s Coffee Club**

Representatives of **Watchfield** **Parish Council**

Members of **Village Hall Management Committee**

Watchfield residents

**Apologies**: John Quinn, Watchfield Primary School

WPC will reach out to the MoD for contact and liaison for community information and events.

**Item 1: Welcome** – Sue Nodder

Welcome everyone to the 2019 Watchfield Village Assembly

This is not a Parish Council meeting, although it is facilitated by the PC. We thank the Village Hall for the use of the hall free of charge.

We also thank all those who have given up their free time to participate tonight. I hope you will listen to their short presentations and then ask questions.

**Item 2: District Cllrs E Ware and S Howell (VWHDC)**

**Introduction**

The past 12 months have again been challenging. We represent 12 Parishes covering a wide range of issues from planning through to waste.

Simon continued as Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee. This Committee is responsible for ensuring compliance with principles and practice of good governance including the monitoring of financial arrangements. It also has a direct link to the Council’s external Auditors. Prudent management has ensured that the Vale’s finances are in a healthy position. Simon also continued as Chair of the Faringdon Area Grants Committee. Elaine as Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment has an extensive portfolio that includes Housing Needs, Environmental Protection, Food Safety, Waste, Car Parks, Mobile Home Parks, Licensing and Community Safety, Parks and Open Spaces.

This report which is the last under the current Vale administration covers the main updates for the whole of the Watchfield & Shrivenham Ward that we represent.

Planning

Planning issues have again been top of the agenda and we continue to do our best in representing the views of residents across the 12 Parishes.

The Local Plan Part 1 was adopted in December 2016. The adoption of the Plan has enabled the Vale to refuse speculative applications that have been submitted. Examples include the application from Gladman for 85 dwellings on the land to the north of the Bovis development known as Townsend Place and the Linden Homes application for 136 dwellings on the golf course.

Local Plan Part 2. The Plan is currently with the Inspector. Following the formal public inspection the Inspector requested that a number of minor amendments be addressed. These required further public consultation and the plan has been re-submitted. The plan does not identify any strategic sites in the Western Vale.

Appeals – Currently there is only one appeal outstanding in the Ward. This will be considered by the Planning Inspectorate in due course.

Legal & General – Phase 1 for 240 dwellings has commenced. Agreement for a temporary access road from the A420 has been agreed and construction vehicles will commence using it shortly. In the longer term there will be a roundabout on the A420 which will enable the residents of the new developments to access the road directly rather than through the village.

Legal & General have continued to hold regular progress meetings with the Parish Council and Ward Members.

Bovis – Townsend Road – Bovis has commenced constructing the 116 dwelllings known as Townsend Place. They did submit a change of house style application to the Vale. However, this was refused as the 3 bed design could easily have been converted to a 4 bed and would then be in breach of the required allocation of 3 bed dwellings.

Taylor Wimpey - Longcot Road – A number of the houses are now occupied. Construction is progressing and many of the original issues have been dealt with.

Charles Church – Highworth Road – The construction of 35 dwellings is well on track. There have been complaints regarding the access from Stallpits Road and these are being dealt with.

Land South of Steeds Farm Gt. Coxwell – An Outline application for a further 125 dwellings has been submitted to the Vale. This application is in addition to the 200 that are already being constructed on part of this strategic site. Amended plans and documentation have been submitted and a viability assessment was submitted in early April of this year.

Lorry Park Chowle Farm Industrial Estate – An Outline application for 9 residential dwellings and 9 offices with associated parking was submitted almost a year ago. Since then amended plans have been submitted and are currently under consideration.

Swindon Eastern Villages - The impact of the start of the new “Eastern Villages” in Swindon are starting to take shape and will have a significant impact on our villages which cannot be underestimated. A total of 8000 dwellings will be built in 8 villages and South Marston will expand. In partnership with the County Council we continue to represent our residents and highlight the many issues that are of concern including the A420.

Recycling

The Vale has slipped from No.2 to No.4 in the whole of the country for the % of recycling material. It is unfortunate that the Vale has been unable to maintain its level of performance. This has been primarily due to contamination of recycling material. To assist residents with recycling the Vale has produced a recycling wheel. The wheel gives information on what can be put in to which bin. Supplies are available from Parish Councils and libraries and further supplies may be obtained from the Waste Team at the Vale.

Fly Tipping

The Vale continues to successfully prosecute individuals for fly-tipping. One of the recent prosecutions was a Faringdon resident who paid two unknown men £25 each to dispose of DIY rubbish., The rubbish was found dumped in two different places in Buscot. He admitted his mistake in not checking that the men had the correct licence and as a result he was fined over £1600.

Climate Emergency

At the February meeting of the full Council the Vale like many other Councils declared a Climate Emergency and agreed to:

\*Ask the Leader to write to the Secretary of State to seek confirmation of the Government’s intention to work with local government on climate change strategies. This the Leader has done and the letter may be viewed on the Vale’s website.

\*Review the Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Management Plan

\*Ensure that all Council policies are routinely reviewed and as far as possible the reporting templates for Council, Cabinet and Committees include an Environmental Impact section.

\*Officers to provide costs and availability of training options for members and officers on how to promote carbon neutral policies for future consideration by Cabinet.

\*Request the Cabinet Member for Housing and Environment to bring a report to Council on the activities of the Oxfordshire Environmental Partnership of which the Vale is a member

\*Continue the positive collaborative work with partners across the district, county and wider region to deliver widespread carbon reductions.

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway

The Vale like other local authorities in Oxfordshire has discussed the proposal for the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. However, to date there has been no formal consultation and until notification is received a full debate cannot begin. It must be recognised that the proposal is in its early stages and there is still considerable work to be undertaken.

The Vale has agreed:

\*To make clear the Councils concerns regarding the potential impact on residents.

\*Welcomes the commitment to greater investment by government in sustainable transport infrastructure options

and

\*Commits to using all reasonable measures to alert residents to the public consultation.

Civil Parking Enforcement

The Vale is exploring options for on-street parking enforcement.

A formal agreement from the county council is required in order to apply to the Department of Transport to delegate civil parking enforcement powers. If county agree and the council decides to take over responsibility it would then need to carry out a full review of the existing car parking orders and yellow lines. Arrangements have been made with other District Council’s and the County to undertake a feasibility study. The County are leading on the procurement of consultants to carry out this work.

Grants

Over the past four years the Vale has given grants of over £800,000 to local communities. Details of the Grants schemes are available on the Vale website.

Policing

As Ward Members we work closely with the local Neighbourhood Police Team. Elaine is a member of the Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG). Although the Vale is identified as a low crime area the recent burglaries have obviously caused concern. There are a number of crime prevention initiatives that are available including Smart Water. You may not always see evidence of our local police, but you can be rest assured that the Neighbourhood Team are out there keeping a watching brief in all our villages.

Conclusion

Along with your local Parish Councillors we work tirelessly for our communities and deal with numerous issues that affect the area.

We attend a variety of meetings and make representation to various Vale Committees, Swindon Borough Council, the County Council and other organisations. We work hard to get our voice heard and our views listened to.

We continue to provide assistance and advice to residents when they have any problems or concerns. We may not advertise what we do on a daily basis but as locals we have our local community at heart and will serve you all as best, we can.

**QUESTIONS-**

**Fly tipping seems to have increased, is this the case?**

**No. figures do not show an increase however the council are publicising more the prosecutions of fly tippers in the county. It is an individual’s responsibility to ensure their waste is collected by a person who holds the correct license to dispose waste, if you do not check you will be prosecuted if your waste is not disposed correctly. If you have checked and still your waste is disposed incorrectly the fly tipper will be prosecuted not you.**

**Item 3: County Cllr Yvonne Constance**

• LPP2: made progress to final stage of adoption of LPP2, which enables the Council to control development within the consulted and approved Local Plan

• GOV FUNDING: uncertainty about the future form of NewHomeBonus(NHB) payments (which are replacing the Gov Rate Support Grant) led to the decision to ‘pause’ the development of the new leisure centre on Mabley way. It now seems probable that NHB will be replaced by a Housing Delivery Grant and as Vale is an outstanding deliverer of new houses, this is likely to replace fully NHB and the leisure centre can go ahead

• HOUSING: development west of Wantage is now well advanced in Grove, at Monk’s farm and on Crabhill. There will be about 5,500 new houses west of Wantage, with no route west out of the town except through East Challow. Traffic modelling indicates that traffic through the village will increase by 30%. I have supported the approach by the developer Dandara to build about 700 new houses west of East Challow and deliver the long awaited (25/30 years) Western Relief Road to link up with the Eastern Relief Road also funded mainly by the developers’ contributions. The East Challow Neighbourhood Plan group is consulting with residents about this scheme.

• GROVE/WANTAGE STATION: The County Council and the Vale have ‘safeguarded’ the land for a Grove/Wantage rail station, but the project is not on Network Rail’s next capital programme, so there will still be a long wait. Current thinking is for a new line from Bristol/Swindon West/ Swindon East/ Grove/Wantage to Oxford to join up with the EWR (Oxford to Cambridge) about to start construction. It could be an important cross-country connection not radial into London and fit well with the development of the Arc between Oxford and Cambridge.

OVO INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S CYCLE RACE 12 June 2019:

County Council has agreed to host this event which will bring huge international attention to Oxfordshire. I have recently had notice from OVO that the race will ride through East Challow on the A417 which a great opportunity for a celebration and a village party is, provided there are no road works. The Parish Council is invited to organise a village event.

COUNTY COUNCIL (OCC)

HIGHWAYS

• OCC has focused all possible resources on mending potholes: about 40,000 have been repaired and four teams are out everyday patching roads (higher standard than before)

OCC is listed among the top 10 repairers of roads in national league tables. £32 million was spent on our roads last year.

We approved a scheme to borrow up to £10 million p.a. for next 5 years, against future growth of Council Tax, to resurface or micro-asphalt, stretches of road to raise the standard of our roads and bridges as fast as possible. Icknield Way will be resurfaced mid July 2019.

WASTE

• OCC is top recycling County in the UK (57% of all waste is recycled)

• OCC and Districts/City have agreed to fund a new officer to promote still better recycling – we have a target of 65% by 2025, and aim to support the Gov new Waste and Resources consultation which sets out proposals to impose costs on manufacturers in proportion to their use of non-recyclable packaging, and to organise recycling nationally

CARBON EMISSIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

• OCC will review its energy strategy this year, with a target to achieve zero net emissions by 2030: currently target is 2050 at 3% per year, but we achieve double that -40% so far

• 50,000 new LED streetlamps will be installed from now as they become due for replacement

• Fire Service has 7 and OCC has first 2 electric vehicles and will replace the whole fleet with electric vehicles as they come up for replacement

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

• OCC has joined with Ox City to install the first Zero Emission Zone in centre of City from 2020 and is working towards traffic congestion management (congestion charge and/or workplace parking levy) to better manage the growth in traffic as we build more houses.

• OCC plans to manage the Park&Rides in p’ship with Ox City: one season ticket to be valid at any site

• OCC will consult now on installation of 9 more resident parking zones in OxCity and encouraging the District Councils to acquire Civil Parking Enforcement powers to control parking locally in their towns and villages.

INFRASTRUCTURE for GROWTH in Oxfordshire

OCC has taken the initiative to bid for Gov funding for infrastructure to serve the growth of housing and businesses in the county. Two bids granted so far:

• GROWTH DEAL: £150 million over 5 years to deliver the needs of 100,000 new homes; £60m of this fund for affordable homes

• DIDCOT HIF (Housing Infrastructure Fund): £218 million for development north of Didcot, incl. new Thames crossing and Clifton Hampden by-pass for up to 15,000 new houses

• A 40 HIF (still to be decided): up to £115m to extend A40 bus lane, and access through Duke’s Cut to Oxford City, to connect about 10,000 new houses

In the REGION;

• East West Rail (Oxford to Cambridge): £1 billion to build rail from Bicester to Bletchley, about to start construction

• Oxford /Cambridge Expressway: route to be decided to connect 1 million homes to be built in the arc, described as England’s Economic Heartland. Major opportunity for improvements to A34 in Oxon.

In the District

• A420: we 3 County Cllrs on A420 set up a safety committee to press for improvements on this major local road which has become a commercial corridor. We intend pedestrian islands and proper bus stops be included in the next local transport plan (LTP5)

• A420: temporary road will be built to connect construction site on Highworth Road. Permanent roundabout will follow for 500 houses. Focus is on the A420 to improve it but how is still in discussions.

• Safety at Major’s Road junction with Longcot Road will be improved with better signing and lining

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 5

Work will start at County in the autumn to develop the next transport plan, enabling us to rethink the priorities and the services we need after 8 years of significant growth since LTP4. We may decide to build smaller park&ride car parks at more destinations to encourage more to use buses into the city/towns, such as along the A420. I hope you will be consulted next year.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OCC is working to increase its engagement with communities across the county, encouraging volunteers to come forward to engage with delivering services. A big team of volunteers already provide OCC’s major library service; keeps open more children’s centres than was possible with funded centres; has major involvement with AGE UK to deliver adult social care and is now hoping to develop community transport, highways wardens for road inspections, ‘safe and well’ visits with the Fire Service, to make best use of the skills and experience of willing volunteers and maybe end some social isolation too.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The demand for social care grows and grows. OCC already spends 52% of its revenue on adult and children’s social care, which is 2% of the population. Gov is reviewing social care funding, and there is a major local government spending review due to report this year.

OCC has developed every initiative to manage care to the highest standard, and CQC reports that some of OCC’s care is ‘outstanding’.

Best news is that 93% of school children got their first choice of primary school, and OCC is increasing its focus on schools and pupil experience after big increase in ‘home schooling’ last year.

**QUESTIONS-**

* **There are two potholes going into Shrivenham and they have paint around them, they have still not been filled after 6 months.**

**When a pothole is more then 3cm deep they will be filled within 24hrs. Other potholes are repaired by a local team and filled when the team is available and by schedule. If a pothole has no line around it the District has no awareness of it.**

* **There were discussions of making the a420 into a dual carriageway why hasn’t this occurred with bridge footpaths?**

**The option of a dual carriageway was trumped. The road is a local RD and with no funding so far for improvements, but we hope to change this.**

* **Is there a weight limit on A420?**

**Not now but a weight restriction on the A420 is a very good idea once the A34 has been improved.**

* **Does OCC charge developers for Potholes?**

**No. Precondition and Postcondition of the road and enforcement would be needed. This is something we are trying to push through.**

**Item 4: Tom Pryor, Thames Valley Police –**

ASK FOR REPORT

**QUESTIONS-**

* **Is it illegal to park partly on the RD and partly on the pavement?**

**Yes, but police would need justification to issue a ticket such as path obstruction. Police are not focusing on parking issue; have found issuing tickets do not solve the problem of parking.**

* **How can we as a community help the police?**

**Community Speed Watch programmes, Community resilience keeping your eye on neighbours and reporting anything suspicious; call 999 or 101 stating you are Thames Valley not wilts.**

* **What is the law on CCTV on your house?**

**ICO gives guidelines. Target the camera at your property not neighbours, you must be able to justify.**

**Item 5: John Quinn, Watchfield Primary School- Report read by Sue Nodder**

The school is continuing to steadily grow, with more children from the local area attending school than ever before. In September 2014 we had 71 children from village and local area this year that number is more than 150. We are continuing to try and develop our community links and welcome any ideas and suggestions anyone may have.

School context

Currently we have 380 children in school. We have also had over 25 children leave school through this year.

There are 152 children from 55 different countries speaking 36 different languages this year.

Of the 380 children currently in school, 184 are from the local area.

234 service children are currently at school also.

We are seeing more and more children wanting places from outside the village, specifically Shrivenham and the new houses in Shrivenham. The children are younger children in reception up to year 3. This balances the decline in application from British Military children we are seeing for next year.

Our aim is to have enough spaces within school for every child who wants a place. However in the current financial climate for schools this may prove to be beyond our grasp. This will have an impact on the local community with families moving into the area being unable to secure a place at a local school.

Highlights

Our annual arts week is this week. This year our theme is The Greatest Showman. We have a whole host of activities planned for all the children. This includes the #watchfieldrocks project that the children have been having a go at.

Later on this year we will be celebrating the very diverse nature of our school with our annual International Week.

For more information please see our website: watchfieldprimary.co.uk or follow us on twitter: @watchfieldpri

As always we will be happy to show anyone the wonderful work the children do and our wonderful school. If you would like a visit, just contact the school office on 01793 782623 or office.2572@watchfield.oxon.sch.uk and we would love to show you around.

**Item 6: Watchfield Parish Council –**

In the recent elections, Watchfield Parish Council was uncontested as the number of candidates did not exceed the number of places. I would like to thank those who put themselves forward for their community and all the councillors from last year who did not stand again. I would remind residents that Parish Councillors are not paid for their roles, nor do they receive a reduction in their council tax bills as some have suggested. The current council consists of me, Dawn Griffiths, Carrie Parker, Ed Beales, Joao Valadas, Stacey Coombs and Bridget Penrose-Lyall. The parish responsibilities include the recreation ground, sports pavilion, cemetery, allotments, playground and estates. We have 2 paid proper officers of the council who do not vote on matters but ensure the council is run correctly. Our clerk, Claire Arnold and Tina Brock, our Responsible Financial Officer. It should go without saying that threatening or abusive behaviour towards parish councillors or staff will not be tolerated whether in person, by phone or via social media. Offenders have, and will, be reported to the relevant authorities.

Changes this year include the long-awaited installation of a dedicated bus stop outside the Knapp’s development for the new residents which has also now been marked in the last few days which may alleviate some of the thoughtless parking in front of the stop.

S106 money from developers and held by the District Council is, at last, starting to be released although the process remains complicated and seems to change without warning. Work on the pavilion on the recreation ground is well under way. The clubroom has been enlarged to allow proper team meetings as well as space for a sports or social venue. The kitchen has been improved and the heating, lighting and water systems changed to take advantage of the solar array. Outside areas are also being improved to make them more usable throughout the year.

The S106 applications for a petanque lane are near completion which will allow the club which meets on the recreation ground car park to play in safety and open up the sport for more users. Also to be released soon is the contribution towards the play area, funding safer surfacing under the equipment, more pieces for different ages and eventual fencing of the area to exclude dogs. The area in front of the sports wall will have a harder wearing surfacing to prevent the winter mud bath.

Adjacent to the sports pavilion will be a small MUGA supporting mini-tennis and other informal sports. All projects have the support of Sports England and the District Council Leisure Services and were devised from the responses to the Community Led Plan.

The saga of the public works of art is hopefully at an end. The District Council were forced to delay and go through a formal planning application process. This has now been passed but the window for installation has been missed so I cannot give you a date for installation of the pieces that you helped design.

Thank you to all those residents who took part in the Big Village Spring Clean. They all did a wonderful job but it was, at the same time, disheartening that 44 bin liners of rubbish were collected as well as fly-tipped larger items. Please do report fly-tipping of any description via the fixmystreet site.

There are still outstanding issues to do with road surfacing, hedging, drainage, fly-tipping, vandalism and Anti-Social Behaviour around the village. We do not have jurisdiction or enforcement capabilities for these things but relay concerns to those who do. Please do report any street problems through FixMyStreet.

We are just about to take over a portion of the public open space on Meadow View, inside the footpath, and will ensure bin provision and seating is installed.

We asked for a 3% rise in our portion of the council tax this year in line with other councils’ rises and predicted increases in service costs. This equates to a £1.15 increase per annum for a Band D property. We remain concerned about continual cuts and moves to push parish councils into taking more responsibility for services with no support.

Everyone is welcome to any parish council meeting – usually the third Tuesday of the month (except August) at 7.30pm at Watchfield Village Hall. Information can be found on the 2 PC noticeboards and www.watchfield.org. For the formal PC view on any topic, please contact the Clerk. Due to the changes in Data Protection legislation we can only add you to the email information list if you expressly give your written permission for this.

Finally, we now have 2 defibrillators in Watchfield funded partly through S106 and partly through New Homes Bonus Scheme money. One is located on the outside wall of the sports pavilion by the main door and the other outside the door of the village hall. You do not need any special training to use one but thank you to the 60+ residents who did attend one of the 2 training courses and will, hopefully, spread the word. When you call 999, the ambulance service knows the locations of defibrillators and the code to get into the box. They will talk you through the use and the machine speaks to you as well. It is impossible to use one on someone who does not require shocking.

**QUESTIONS-**

**Last few years there has been a build up of heavy trucks parking outside co-op, what can be done about it?**

**Until parking enforcement is in force there is little we can do. We have asked OCC highways for advice but no solution yet. WPC welcome all suggestions.**

**Can Bollards be used?**

**The trucks will then just park along the road.**

**There is a vacancy on the council, will the council advertise? It does not seem fair that someone could be co-opt onto the council when an election has just occurred.**

**Clerk to investigate the time frame for co-opting after an election.**

**Item 7: Watchfield Village Hall and Acorn Club, Ruth Holman –**

The Village Hall is now a stand alone registered charity,

All funding comes from fundraising such as the summer fete (2nd June), Christmas Fayre, Cream Teas, Bingo nights. We are currently seeking grants and crowd funding to help towards the costs of the extension that has been approved.

The hall is very busy, let out every evening to a number of groups and societies such as Table Tennis, Pilates, Children’s Group, Friendly Club, Exercise classes, Acorn and children’s parties on the weekend.

Acorn Club meet once a month on the third Tuesday of every month for those that are retired. We have around 20 member and a two-course meal provided with entertainment in the afternoon, the cost is £7.00. New helpers are always welcomed as we need help with setting up or cooking please do get in touch if you can help.

The Hall extension, meeting with the architect in place.

Weekly Café- help needed.

St Thomas Church open daily and can be used for christenings and weddings. An organist is needed if you know of anyone.

**Item 8: Watchfield over 50s coffee group, Elaine Bayston –**

The Over 50s coffee group started in 1999 in this village hall. We now meet every Thursday 2-3.30pm at the Community Room, Maidens Close. We meet for company, play bingo and have occasional trips out to garden centres and of course our annual Christmas lunch. Tea, coffee, cakes & biscuits are served free of charge each week. Our aim is to get more people from the village to come to this friendly group.

Christmas Eve Carols

This annual event under the tree at the bottom of the High Street has been running for nearly 25years. It started with just a few villagers and has grown to over 300 people attending now. This event is a great way to start the Christmas season for the community. Singing carols accompanied by local players and more recently help by Pegasus Band. Local children usually sing Away in a Manger and Father Christmas hands out sweets to them during his busy schedule. People as far as Witney, Abingdon & Swindon now come to this annual event. A collection is taken which benefits the local organisations. Our aim is to keep this traditional event running each year & maybe grow it.

**Item 10: Thank you**

It only remains for me to thank all our speakers and you all for coming along. As ever, we are grateful for the support and community spirit of the vast majority of residents. Thank you, once again.